Announcements:
UNF creative writing faculty Marcus Pactor reads from his new book *Vs. Death Noises*, Friday, October 19 at 8 p.m. in the Student Union ballroom.

UNF alumni Tim Gilmore reads from his new book *This Kind of City: Ghost Stories and Psychological Landscapes*, Thursday, Nov. 1, 6:30 to 8:30 in Building 58W, Room 2704 (Student Union Auditorium). Go [www.jaxpsychogeo.com](http://www.jaxpsychogeo.com) or [http://eat-magazine.bandcamp.com/album/waiting-in-the-lost-rooms](http://eat-magazine.bandcamp.com/album/waiting-in-the-lost-rooms) for a preview. Contact Mark Ari (mari@unf.edu) for more information.

Fiction Fix #11 now online. Go to [www.fictionfix.net](http://www.fictionfix.net). "A distinctly graphic discourse runs through our culture," says Graphic Literature Editor and UNF Department of English faculty member Russell Turney. “So, thinking critically about graphic texts, learning how to read them, and even working to produce them ourselves are (not to sell it too hard) perhaps survival skills for the 21st century. The current Fiction Fix issue participates in this growing and important graphic discourse: one that recognizes that word and image are correlated; and one that recognizes that a genre that marries word and image on the page is a genre worthy of attention and appreciation.”
Margaret Atwood Brings Wisdom and Humor to the UNF Campus

This past March, author Margaret Atwood came to UNF for the Douglas Anderson School for the Arts Writers’ Festival. With help from English faculty Mark Ari and financial support from Academic and Student Affairs here at UNF, Atwood journeyed from Canada to spend an evening reading that left her audience laughing with her dry, acerbic wit.

Atwood read from numerous works, including her non-fiction work *Negotiating with the Dead: A Writer on Writing* (2003).

She asked, “For whom does the writer write?”

For Atwood, her first reader was her Brownie leader she named “Brown Owl.”

“When I was nine, I was enrolled a secret society with handshakes, signs. It was called the Brownies.”

And to earn one of her badges, she wrote a tiny book, threaded together with yarn that she gave to her leader, a woman who became a character in *Cat’s Eye* (1998). That first response to her writing filled her with gratitude, and fifty years after she wrote her first book, a woman contacted her saying her aunt was “Brown Owl.” Atwood visited the woman who had saved her books from childhood; she died three days later. We write for someone between “Brown Owl” and God, says Atwood.

“The writer writes for Brown Owl or whomever your Brown Owl may be.”

Atwood went on read from her final chapter of the same work, a chapter titled “Descent: Negotiating with the Dead. Who Makes the Trip to the Underworld, and Why?”

“All writing of the narrative kind . . . is motivated, deep down, by fear of and fascination with mortality.”

She went onto comment on her book *The Year of the Flood* that deals with those who survive the release of a plague that kills nearly everyone, except for a few with peculiar attributes, such as the ability to moderate their body temperature or repel insects with built-in insecticide (in their bodies). She’s fascinated by the extremes of human nature.

She commented wryly, “I
like to write cheerful books.”

Atwood shared writing tips—like letting the characters take you where they need to go. She tried a more organized approach once, using notecards, only to find the results dull and uninteresting. She recommended letting others read your books to make sure your facts are dead on. After years of listening to questions about why she always had female narrators, she decided to write from a male perspective and asked a man of the approximate age of her narrator to read for her. She advised male authors to do this, citing a moment where someone imaged that women jump into pantyhose in order to put them on. In response to the question whether the writing gets easier, she said that it does not. If you have writer’s block, turn your attention elsewhere and then come back to what you are working on.

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After reading selections from her works, she entertained questions, answering all of them except for one: Who are your favorite authors? She noted that if she named a few, then the others who had gone unmentioned would get “annoyed,” something she didn’t intend to do. When asked if she writes differently for today’s audiences (since she maintains a Twitter account), she didn’t respond directly, but she did share her experience on Twitter. Her identity had to be “verified” and two other people claimed to be her. Then followers didn’t really believe it was her. She has one follower whose icon is a revolving skull, whose description reads, “I am a skull that revolves”! She described Twitter as a bit like “summer camp,” with games, jokes, and crossword puzzles. She will send out a url of a book she’s reading now and again to just “sprinkle fairy dust” on the upcoming authors.

Atwood did sprinkle fairy dust on all those who attended her question and answer session and reading. We at UNF are grateful to Douglas Anderson and English faculty here at UNF for making such an event possible.

—Betsy Nies

Playing with Words and Fighting for Commas: An Interview with Margaret Atwood

For some, the highlight of the 2012 Writers’ Festival at UNF was an on-stage interview between the Department of English’s Mark Ari and Margaret Atwood, during which Ari posed a series of questions about writing and publishing, and Atwood took questions from the audience. With her singular wit and frankness, Atwood delivered many pieces of advice to the crowd of ardent writers.

“Believe in your work. You have to believe in it and you have to have the vocabulary.

—Betsy Nies
“Anything that’s in a book – no matter what editorial compromises you’ve made – it’s your fault!” she declared, before regaling the audience with stories of wrangling with her editors over each comma and run-on sentence she wanted to keep. And lastly, Atwood declared, “The unsung and invaluable feature of narrative is that [writing] is built into the human genome. Playing with words is hereditary.”

She characterized the work of the writer as labor of education, elaborating on the ancient nature and important role of narrative in our history. For Atwood, stories have helped us survive; they have shown us what works and what does not. For her readers, her work provides an allegorical means for reflecting on life—she helps her readers survive as well.

—Emily Michael

UNF Student Cherrelle Fant Brings Drama to the Community

On a hot summer night at the Combined Gospel Christian Fellowship, a small church located among the storefronts on Blanding Boulevard, UNF students and community members gathered to present Gloria Bond Clunie’s award-winning civil rights play North Star.

The production was the brain-child of UNF English/Drama major Cherrelle Fant, recipient of a Dean’s Leadership Council Transformational Learning Scholarship. When applying for the scholarship, Fant asked herself a question: “What can one college student do to affect the community in which she lives?”

Fant organized actors and community members to produce this emotionally challenging play that takes its viewers into the heart of the Civil Rights struggle—not just the public struggle, but equally as importantly the private struggle among family and community members who wanted to not only protect their children, but also give them the chance to stand up politically.

Fant received assistance from Ronica Jhena Arntzen, a UNF alumna with her B.A. in English and Drama, who returned to direct the play. Actors sat on black cubes facing the wall, then turned and entered the action as it unfolded. UNF first-year student Rodnae Johnson played the role of Aurelia, the adult woman who was remembering the pain of her youth. Johnson faced the audience, generating an ongoing link between the present and past for the viewers.

Diannah Williams played the young Aurelia, bringing energy and pain to the role that required enduring racial slurs, reacting to that first kiss, and much more. Jerrel Kight, a UNF communications major, played her best friend Willie Joe Poole, a young man who watches the sit-in at the local lunch counter and gets beaten for his attendance. Kight skillfully demonstrated the internal struggle to not respond violently when those around him were using violence to drive home their point. Other UNF actors including Troy Capers, a UNF English major, as Franklin,
who played the serious and astute college student training people how to respond to violence. Fant played Aurelia’s mom, giving life to the challenges of both wanting to protecting your child and let her live.

Community members gave the play a sense of reality. Of all ages and from all walks of life, they generously gave their time to bring back this challenging era. Ryan Sinclair played a very believable father who taught his daughter to follow the North Star in her heart. Al Menefee brought a quiet strength and humor to the role of Reverend Blake. Ishmael A. Muhammad boldly and eerily took on the role of a hanged man Uncle Frank. Greg “The IGive” East offered a powerful performance as Hawkins. Vanette Sinclair filled the stage with a quiet grace as Grandma. James Viggiano III, a returning UNF alumnus, played the unenviable role of Mr. Connell, the manager of Woolsworth, while Bryan Childers played a white farmer who rescues the lost Aurelia, emphasizing the shared humanity of those on both sides of the struggle.

Following the play, panel members Tim Donovan, Dr. Deborah Bankhead and Dr. Deborah Williams-Watson, Fant, and Arntzen discussed the challenges of facing historical trauma. Audience members joined in, drawing attention to the importance of both facing the past and letting go of racial categories to move forward. The audience enthusiastically participated, suggesting the significance of the play to current issues of identity.

Congratulations to Cherrelle, Ronica, Dr. Pam, and all of those who participated in this exciting event!

**UNF Welcomes Author Laird Hunt**

It was a rainy evening on Friday, March 23, 2012 but students gladly joined to watch Indiana native Laird Hunt recite some of his recent work and answer their fascinating questions. UNF faculty Duncan Barlow presented a warm introduction to Hunt, acknowledging him as an eminent figure of American literature, “a champion of young voices in writing, a translator, and a friend to a world of unheard voices in art, music, and literature.”

Born in Singapore, but raised in Indiana, Hunt is a fiction writer known best for his innovative and variant style, containing poetic elements, seen in *Indiana, Indiana*, as well as puzzling twists and dark humor of *The Exquisite*.

Students were privileged to hear Hunt’s first reading of the night from the lost chapter, Green Metal Door, from his first novel *The Impossibly*, only included in the second edition, released in February 2012.

He shared the short story “Hong Kong Story” and described it as “meditative in nature,” followed by a more narrative story called “The Face”; he mentioned that both possessed some
autobiographical details. Hunt enjoys blending fiction with facts to captivate the readers, providing them with more than just the common truths.

Hunt was more than happy to answer student’s questions about his readings of the night and about his work in general. When asked by fellow student Taylor Milton why he decided to be a writer, he noted that he had always been an avid reader of many different fields, such as philosophy, history, and fiction, but started writing during his first year teaching English as a second language in Japan after undergraduate school.

Shawn Sansberry, an English major, asked Hunt what his writing routine was. Hunt replied that memorable experiences, music, and different texts inspire him, but when he is ready to express his ideas, all he needs is time to shine.

“I’m a ‘do-it-when-I-can’ writer.”

After listening to Hunt speak, no student left the room empty handed. Students watched the projector of the beautiful and interesting photographs Hunt shared while he read his stories. He kindly ended the gathering with a book signing.

Writing fiction is not an easy process; Hunt himself stated it could be frustrating, especially when you express an idea differently than planned.

“It involves a period of time with a relentless quality of work, but there is a sense of joy that goes with the challenge… that’s why I keep going.”

- Kameelah Bilal

Cage Festival Honors Experimental Musician and Composer John Cage

The Spring 2012 John Cage festival was hosted by UNF’s Dr. Clark Lunberry and welcomed esteemed and dynamic artists to celebrate Cage’s 100th birthday. Dutch performance artist Jaap Blonk, world renowned violinist Tom Chiu of New York, and pianist Louis Goldstein of Wake Forest University performed selections from Cage’s oeuvre that introduced listeners to the eclectic mix of sounds that encompass the revolutionary changes that Cage made for music, art, and dance.

Jaap Blonk’s performance can be likened to all the noises you ever made with your mouth as a child, but were embodied in an adult man’s throat. Imagine when you played with pots and pans, pretending that you were a musician. Noise cannot describe his art. Magic does. One of his first performances “Drinking Song” combined throat and guttural noises, clicks, growls, hums, stomping, and changes in his facial expressions, all performed as though he was having a conversation with someone on stage. Blonk said that he was inspired by the phrase “The time or hour is made of rubber” and decided to create music made of rubber. The sound was from the “instruments of Java and applied a bit of stretching.” During his performance, Blonk switched from his voice to “the second instrument everyone has next to the voice – the cheek synthesizer.” As an audience member, you cannot just listen to Blonk: you have to watch him. He performed Cage’s “4’33,”
where he kept a timer and listened to the coughs, sneezes, whispers, and laughs of the audience; “Primordial Sonata”; “Aria”; and a Solo from “Songbooks,” which was based on the Zen expression “every day is a beautiful day.”

Tom Chiu, of the legendary Flux Quartet, performed pieces that Cage wrote for string instruments. Chui was immediately drawn to the first piece of “26’ 1.999”’ and then he came upon “Cheap Imitations,” which lasts thirty to forty-five minutes depending on the pace of the performer.

What struck me during Chui’s performance of Cage’s Etude #1 was the jerky motions and sudden sounds juxtaposed with the silence in between each note. He played shrill, short notes in Etude #4 that contrasted with the lower and longer notes of Etude #12. You could hear the notes bump around the white walls and black floors, sounding eerily like a horror movie soundtrack, and creating anticipation that someone would jump out from around the corner. The silence in between each piece was heavy. When the applause came, its thundering sound broke the intensity of the room. From “Cheap Imitations,” Chiu performed a piece that consisted of slower, sleepier notes that sounded like someone fidgeting to get comfortable in bed.

Louis Goldstein performed Cage’s works that were arranged for the piano. He performed “4’33”’ with the doors open so the audience could hear the traffic among the other noises of feet shuffling, throats clearing, whispers, cameras going off, footsteps, laughter, and papers shuffling. Goldstein’s performance of “ASLSP” made evident Cage’s experimentation with sounds to create some of the rhythms for the piano. The final performance “Sonatas and Interludes” was a group of twenty pieces that spanned an hour. The beat and rhythm does not remain the same throughout the entire piece or even within the smaller works. The prepared piano, an invention of Cage’s, created sounds like a xylophone, bells, drums, and piano, sounding very much like the instruments that inspired Blonk in his performances.

By listening to Jaap Blonk, Tom Chiu, and Louis Goldstein, one could hear that John Cage loved to play with sound and enjoyed the audience response he received from his performances. His musical innovations have created a legacy that continues to inspire, shock, and at the very least, entertain listeners who seek a change from normative instrumental music. His style outrageously stands out from the mundane, causing those who do not wish to stray from the norm to wonder, what was he thinking when he composed that piece? The only way to find out is to continue listening to his works.

—Kelsi Hasden
On April 17th, *Yes, They’re Real III* celebrated its final release. The last volume in a series of creative nonfiction, the new eBook collects four short stories by Sam Bilheimer, April Hutchinson, Heather Peters and Travis Wildes. The cover features original lomography by April Hutchinson. As with previous releases, each story was penned during one of Mark Ari’s writing workshops at the University of North Florida. *Yes, They’re Real III: The Final Collection of Creative Nonfiction* is available wherever eBooks are sold.

A paperback compilation of *Yes, They’re Real* is due to be published this fall. It will showcase twelve stories from the series with a new introduction written by Mark Ari. A public reading in the Jacksonville Beach area is in the works and copies of the book will be available for purchase. Check www.facebook.com/RiverHouse.UNF for future details.

—Travis Wildes

**Career Panel: Why Major in English?**

On Thursday April 5th the English Department hosted their first career panel for English Majors who were interested in the different options open in the business world instead of the traditional route of becoming a teacher. We had two guests; Tara Harkin and Todd Kincaid and surprise student speaker, Jessica Fessenden, who talked about experiences with their background in English and what they found to be most helpful from the skill set they obtained as English Majors.

Harkin, who is a UNF alum, shared her most recent experiences working as a public relations manager for CSX Railroads, specifically for State Government and Community Affairs. For Harkin one of the reason she loves public relations because every day she gets to do something a little different. Her writing and communications skill from her background as an English major come in handy when she starts writing press releases. However, it wasn’t just a writing background that set her up for success. Harkin suggests utilizing the resources at Career Wings such as their mock interview process and resume proofing. In addition, Harkin also relied heavily on her previous experience working as a contract staffer for Randstat that taught her valuable organizational skills and gave her human resourcing experience.

Current graduate student Jessica Fessenden is getting involved with medical web development through copywriting. Copywriting enables her to work in a growing market where
she has the opportunity to learn how to write script for web pages, allowing her to gain valuable insight to another side of writing.

Kincaid was not only a previous student at UNF; he also taught introductory writing for a year at UNF. While he found the classes to be a lot of fun, and the students to be engaging, it wasn’t what he really wanted to do. He tried several other jobs utilizing his writing background, then moved on to marketing services. He has currently found his niche as a business proposal writer, which is a written offer from a seller to a potential buyer. These documents are necessary for sellers who are considering more than one price for a purchase.

Though employed in three different markets Harkin, Fessenden, and Kincaid have nothing but encouragement for what the graduates of UNF’s Department of English can achieve. There are many opportunities to seek new and interesting experiences utilizing the writing, research, analyzing and reading skills that English majors possess!

If you want to attend great events like this put on by the English Department make sure to check the UNF website or visit Building 8 where information on events are posted.

—Brentley Stead

English Graduate Organization Holds Research Conference

On the evening of Monday, April 2, the English Graduate Organization (EGO) and Sigma Tau Delta, the English Honor Society, hosted the Annual Presentation of Graduate Research. The evening provided graduate students with the opportunity to present papers, posters, and works in progress, in the three sessions of the conference.

After opening remarks by EGO President Emily Michael, the students and faculty assembled heard papers by Jacob Lusk, Tiffany Young, and Nick Michaud. After the three papers were presented, students and faculty had the opportunity to ask Jacob, Tiffany, and Nick questions about their work. The ensuing discussion covered a wide range of topics, from 18th century philosophy and Jonathan Swift to the nature of narrative in Modernist British Literature.

The audience was directed to the adjacent ballroom for the second portion of the evening, a poster session featuring research studies designed by the students of ENC 6942: Empirical Research in Composition. Here, the thirteen students of Dr. Beasley’s course fielded questions about the construction of their research studies, the format of the research study, and the topics they’d chosen. As with the previous session, student presenters in the poster session chose a variety of topics: linguistic sexism and ableism, Renaissance periodicals, feminist rhetoric in political speeches, and the effect of video games on student writing.

Works in Progress, the third session of the evening, included presentations by Brandy French, Tim Knickerbocker, and the students of ENL 6455: “From Wonder to Error”: Defect & Deformity in British Literature. Dr. Laura Heffernan concluded the academic portion of the evening with a brief and informative discussion of own research philosophy, encouraging students to embrace collaborative research projects with professors and peers.

The students of Sigma Tau Delta hosted a post-conference reception at J. Alexander’s at the Town Center. Students and faculty enjoyed unwind after the long hours of work that facilitated the success of this research conference.

—Emily Michael
Poets Serve Words for EAT

Mark Ari, faculty advisor of EAT, serves as producer and cover artist on the latest iteration in the series, EAT POEMS. While the original EAT showcased numerous writers and artists in each issue, Ari says EAT POEMS will be “a series of digital EP albums, each focusing on a single poet reading his or her own work.” Yet, EAT remains a vehicle for honoring single as well.

The first writer to recite her words under the new EAT label is poet Frances Driscoll. An accomplished poet with two published collections “Talk to Me” (Black River Press) and “The Rape Poems” (Jack Estes’ Pleasure Boat Studio), Driscoll narrates her latter collection dealing with the subject of rape and its after effects. The print edition of “The Rape Poems” has been highly acclaimed, as “Island of the Raped Women” won a Pushcart Prize award and many of the edition’s other poems are Pushcart nominees. Published for the first time in the spoken word format, the digital release through EAT features eight tracks from Driscoll, such as, “Here, Among Old Roses,” “Some Lucky Girls,” and the award winning “Island of the Raped Women.” The print edition of Driscoll’s “The Rape Poems” has also been referenced by trauma therapists and social workers, taught at universities, and used as a tool in the sexual awareness training of the Police, Air Force and National Guard.

This summer, Tim Gilmore, who teaches at FCSJ and a graduate of the Department of English’s M.A. read his poems for EAT’s volume “Waiting in Lost Rooms.” The next album EAT Justiss offers a fitting tribute to local poet Jacksonville poet Alan Justiss. Heather Stafford, Al Letson, Troy Lukkarila, Nestor Armando Gil, Jennifer Ray Miles, Clark Lunberry, Noah Lunberry, Gary Jones, and Heather Sielicki all added their voices and their hearts to this moment. To experience EAT visit http://eat-magazine.bandcamp.com. —Travis Wildes

UNF Alumni News

Angela Kicklighter (’07) was accepted into Florida Coastal School of Law here in Jax, and offered a $30,000 per year scholarship!

Tim Gilmore read from his new book This Kind of City: Ghost Stories and Psychological Landscapes. Go to http://jaxpsychogeo.com/ to sample this hyperlinked work that explores the histories—both real and imagined—of Jacksonville. Gilmore will be reading from his work Thursday, Nov. 1 in the Student Union Ballroom.

Contact Betsy Nies (bnies@unf.edu) if you would like to become a member of the Newsletter staff!
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Betsy Nies, Editor

Travis Wildes